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## **FOREWORD**

This publication provides an account of progress made by Commonwealth countries on Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals in education. It combines a general statistical presentation to project the overall comparative status in performance, and a country by country scorecard approach to facilitate analysis and comparison. It therefore enables the reader to see both regional and national trends.

In relation to the achievement of universal primary education and gender parity in primary and secondary education, it shows a mixed picture in educational performance and achievement across and between countries. Over one third of the 40 Commonwealth countries for which data are available have primary net enrolment rates of over 95 per cent and over 90 per cent gross intake rates (GIR). For these countries universal primary education/universal primary completion (UPE/UPC) has been achieved if not necessarily sustained. However, there remain Commonwealth countries where both net enrolment rates and GIR indicate that 25 per cent of school age children are neither in primary or secondary education and that almost 75 per cent of the children who should be entering the final grade of primary school do not do so.

There is a continued high disparity against girls in a few countries at both primary and secondary level. In some Commonwealth countries, notably but not exclusively in the Caribbean, boys are disadvantaged at the secondary level. Thirteen countries have demonstrably achieved gender parity at both primary and secondary levels, though the number of countries in this group could be higher if data were available more widely.

The report will assist Commonwealth Ministries of Education, development partners and other key stakeholders in identifying countries and focus areas where more support and work is needed in the years up to and beyond 2015. Lack of up to date data for effective monitoring, evaluation, and evidence-based policy development remains a very big challenge in some Commonwealth countries. Where data is available there is a need to be aware that statistics may hide significant national or regional variations in resources, performance, and achievement.

A close to final version of this report was presented to Ministers of Education at their Kuala Lumpur conference in June 2009, where the theme was 'education beyond global goals and targets'. This corrected and amended version, now formally published, should help all those concerned with educational achievement in Commonwealth education to focus efforts to best effect.

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